

BRIEFS

DECEMBER BATTLES KILL 100 CHRISTIANS

ADAMAWA STATE, Nigeria (BP) — More than 100 Christians have died so far in December clashes with militant Fulani herdsman in northeastern Nigeria, and the military is suspected of aiding the attackers, Christian leaders there told World News. The attacks began after Fulani herdsman raped and killed a pregnant mother on her farm in the Numan community of Adamawa, killing her husband and brother when they intervened, chaplain Zenald Zidon said. When Numan community members staged a counterattack, herdsman responded by ambushing several Adamawa communities beginning Dec. 4.

U.N. DETERS NATIONS AGAINST JERUSALEM

UNITED NATIONS (BP) — The United Nations voted Dec. 21 to ask nations not to establish diplomatic missions in Jerusalem. By a 128-9 vote with 35 abstentions and 21 nations absent, the resolution expressed "deep regret at recent decisions concerning the status of Jerusalem" — an apparent reference to U.S. President Donald Trump's Dec. 6 announcement the U.S. would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and move the U.S. embassy there. A similar resolution received 14 affirmative votes Dec. 18 in the 15-member U.N. Security Council but was vetoed by the U.S.

EDWARDS CENTER COMES TO GATEWAY

ONTARIO, Calif. (BP) — A Jonathan Edwards Center will be established at Gateway Seminary in Ontario, Ca. The center, which will be known as JEC, will be affiliated with the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University in New Haven, Ct. An agreement between the two institutions was signed in October. "We expect to officially open the center... some time in 2018," said seminary president Jeff Iorg.

Top 2017 news stories tagged by Baptist Press



ACTS 9:10
"I AM HERE, LORD!"

2018 STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE
Brandon Baptist Church, Brandon
January 28-29, 2018

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — In a year where scandal, tragedy, political strife, and devastating hurricanes dominated the headlines, some might be surprised this year's most-read Baptist Press story was about a movie.

This list of most-read stories for the year, drawn in order from the web-traffic tracker Google Analytics, included:

1. **The Shack.** William Paul Young's New York Times bestseller generated heated debate regarding the story's portrayal in both the book and subsequent movie of the Trinity and also the story's wide variances with Scripture. LifeWay Christian Resources eventually removed the book from its shelves.

2. **Transgender to transformed.** Laura Perry of Bartlesville, Okla., who lived as a transgender man for nearly a decade of her adulthood, surrendered her life to Christ, was baptized, and became actively involved at First Church in Bartlesville. "I am living proof that God's love is greater than the devil's lies," Perry said.

3. **Death and angels.** A column by Shane Pruitt spoke of the difficult experience of officiating a child's funeral, and criticized using such phrases with the family as, "Heaven has another angel today." Instead, Pruitt suggested, "Hurt with them, hold them, and just listen."

4. **Ole Miss coach resigns.** University of Mississippi head football coach Hugh Freeze stepped down amid scandal involving a "pattern of personal misconduct." A member of Pinelake Church in Oxford, Freeze was known for traveling the state to give his personal Christian testimony.

5. **Author's homosexual views.** Bestselling Christian author Eugene Peterson, known for penning The Message paraphrase of Scripture, reportedly said in an interview with Religion News Service he does not believe homosexuality is sinful and that he would perform a same sex wedding if asked to do so. Peterson later retracted his previous statement and clarified his beliefs.

6. **Inauguration Day.** Southern Baptist Convention President Steve Gaines urged Christians to pray for Donald Trump and his family as Trump was sworn in to the highest office in the land.

7. **CP funds escrowed.** Dallas-area pastor Jack Graham announced Prestonwood Church's decision to temporarily escrow Cooperative Program (CP) funds in order to evaluate future support of Southern Baptist Convention causes. Following two months of evaluation, Prestonwood Church resumed giving through the CP.

8. **Coach renews Christian zeal.** Former University

see TOP on p. 7

Paul Pressler accused of sexual abuse

HOUSTON (BP and local reports) — A man mentored by retired Texas judge and Southern Baptist Conservative Resurgence leader Paul Pressler is alleging Pressler sexually abused him for decades. Pressler's legal team released a statement to Baptist Press Dec. 12, in which attorney Ted Tredennick called the allegations "frivolous."

Pressler, who was one of the chief engineers of a strategy in the late 20th century to turn the Southern Baptist Convention back to its theologically conservative roots, denies the allegations by convicted felon Gareld Duane Rollins, who

filed a lawsuit Oct. 18 claiming Pressler sexually abused him repeatedly between the late 1970s, when Rollins was 14 years old and the year 2014.

Rollins' petition, filed in Texas state district court, alleges he was enrolled in a young adult Bible study which Pressler led at First Church in Houston, Texas, and later served as Pressler's office assistant.

Rollins named Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, its president Paige Patterson — another Conservative Resurgence leader — Pressler's wife Nancy, Houston's First Church, Pressler's former law partner Jared Woodfill and the Woodfill Law Firm as additional defendants, alleging they facilitated the abuse and "concealed the wrongful conduct

of Pressler" from law enforcement authorities.

Each of the defendants has denied all allegations by Rollins in their responses to the lawsuit, which is seeking more than one million dollars in relief because Rollins said the alleged abuse contributed to Rollins' life of substance abuse and crime.

Pressler, age 87, was a justice on the Court of Appeals of Texas, 14th District, and a member of the Texas state legislature. He also served Southern Baptists in various other volunteer capacities.

Pressler's formal response to the lawsuit, filed with the court Nov. 17, stated that he "generally and categorically" denied "each and every allegation" in the suit.



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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Through the Bog

The Year of our Lord 2018 is upon us. Just like 2017, at this time next year we'll wonder what happened to 2018. A modern axiom states, "What once happened over 90 years now happens in 90 days." Most people would probably agree. To young people, it's just the pace of living today. Nothing over which to get exercised. For older folks, it's a terrifying roller coaster ride of automatically upgrading smartphones and hundreds of satellite entertainment options, not to mention all the truncated grammar and sentence structure nightmares brought on by rapidly emerging interpersonal communication systems.

Internet tech sites are reporting that the next generation of TV sets (do they still call them "sets"?), those above all, will have higher resolution than the human eye can discern. The question then must be asked, what's the use in having a television picture so sharp that your eyes can't tell anyway? That's just one of the thousands of philosophical questions that we didn't even know we'd be asking 90 days ago.

Even more unfathomable, we are receiving reports from 40-year-old spacecraft on the edge of the heliosheath, where nothing touched by human hands has ever traveled.

One of the most dizzying aspects of modern life is news. Satellites and undersea fiber optic cables can zoom an important story to us from the other side of the world before we can blink — and the story can change before we blink again.

The volume and pace of events around the world and the speed with which those events are processed and delivered to us in high-definition color is enough to intellectually disorient even the smartest people. Virtually all of us have had the experience of excitingly relating a breaking news story to a friend or coworker, only to have that person look down at his/her smartphone beeping an alert and say, "Sorry, what you're trying to tell me is being updated right now."

Unfortunately, along with

the breathtaking technology, techniques, and convenience of modern news reporting comes an extra-large helping of bad. That's the case with most things. The Internet, for example, is the vehicle that brings us endless information about Jesus and the Gospel and how to be saved, along with more pornography than one person can watch in a lifetime.

So it is with news. Along with accurate, unbiased reporting of stories that seriously affect our lives and families and security is a bottomless cesspool of half-truths, fake news, manipulation, and flat-out lying. That would help explain the booming rates of corrections and outright retractions of stories reported by the most venerable news media organizations in the country.

How does a Christian spot the problems with modern news reporting? How does a Christian deal with news media falsehoods?

One good way is to glean news from a variety of sources. Liberals dislike watching/reading conservative news outlets. Conservatives dislike watching/reading liberal news outlets. News outlets that strike a middle-of-the-road stance are disliked by just about everyone. Still, opening one's mind to other ways of looking at the world is crucial to developing the big picture of what's going on.

A better way, however, is to read your Bible. The Bible may not mention satellites and undersea fiber optic cables, but like every other decision we must make in life the Bible will put our feet on the path of truth when we are trying to find our way through the thick bog of modern news reporting.

The best way though is, yes, to pray. Pray for holiness and righteousness as you weave your way through the confusing obstacles and corruption of modern news media, as you filter the bad from the good that you need to make proper decisions on your future and your family's future.

Take those actions, and God will guide you. He always has, and He always will. That's just what He tends to do for the people He loves.

Power of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a significant theme in God's Word. Our family has experienced forgiveness in a clear and visible way.

My dad, Bob Harrington, was dramatically converted on April 15, 1958, when I was only six years old. He attended a revival meeting in his hometown of Sweet Water, AL, to find some insurance prospects, and instead he found the Lord. During the fifth stanza of Just As I Am, Dad was forgiven of his sin and saved by the grace of God.

He preached his first sermon three days later and led his parents to faith in Jesus Christ. My mother, sister, and I followed Dad in faith and became active in church. The Lord called my dad to ministry and led him to attend New Orleans Seminary.

In a chapel service, then-seminary president Leo Eddleman presented a challenge to students: "Any pocket of sin is a mission field, and the closest Christian to it is a missionary." Dad responded to that call and began a ministry in the French Quarter of New Orleans. In 1962, he was proclaimed by the mayor to be, "The Chaplain of Bourbon Street."

His ministry expanded in the 1960s and 1970s from the second block of Bourbon Street to nationwide crusades and national television. Many people were converted and called to the ministry through his personal soul-winning and powerful preaching. God used Bob Harrington to share His gift of forgiveness with thousands of others.

At the peak of Dad's ministry, the devil threw him a pass and he ran for defeat (drawing from his own words). He left the Lord, left the ministry, left my mother, and left our family. What a painful time for each of us.

God immediately spoke to me about forgiveness. I needed to forgive my dad even though he did not ask for forgiveness. Initially I did not want to forgive him, but later I chose to obey God's clear command. We prayed faithfully for Dad's restoration for 17 years before he returned to the Lord. What a time of rejoicing for our family! We were a part of his redemption story as Dad sought forgiveness from each of us.



Guest opinion
with Rhonda Kelley

In his later years, Dad had dementia. He was completely at peace in his condition. He spent his days sitting in his big red chair watching television.

As I walked into his little house one afternoon, God gave me a vivid example of total forgiveness. A divorced couple on the Jerry Springer program was screaming at each other. Dad looked up at me and said, "Isn't it wonderful that no one in our family has ever been divorced? We all love each other."

Wow! Who would have ever thought that such truth could come from a Jerry Springer moment? Dad himself had been divorced twice, but God had forgiven him and taken his sin out of his conscious thoughts. What a perfect picture of forgiveness! When God forgives, our sin is completely removed.

My sister and I rejoice in the forgiveness of God which allowed our family to be reunited and our dad to have joy until his last breath. To our knowledge, Dad had no memory of the time he was away from the Lord. He talked often about our family of years ago and remembered many amazing days of ministry.

When once asked by a reporter what led him back to the Lord, Dad sincerely replied, "I have never left the Lord. I have always loved Him." God literally removed his sin and blotted it from his memory, so he remembered it no more. I will always be grateful for being a part of a real-life story of forgiveness!

Kelley is adjunct professor of women's ministry and leads the Ministry Wife Program at New Orleans Seminary, where her husband Chuck is president.

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Americans yawning at decline in Christmas religiosity?

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Most Americans believe their society is increasingly abandoning the religious aspects of Christmas but don't seem to be overly troubled about it, according to new Pew Research Center findings.

Only 32% overall of Americans find the trend troubling, Pew disclosed in the study released Dec. 12. While 56% of U.S. adults recognized the trend, a quarter of that subgroup said the trend doesn't bother them.

Pew concurrently found a religious appreciation of the season is declining among individuals themselves as well as across American culture. The study showed declining numbers of Christians and unbelievers ("nones") who approve of religious Christmas displays on government property, embrace as historical truth the biblical story of Jesus' birth, and who prefer religious greetings to secular ones during the season.

Beliefs also broke along political party lines, Pew said.

"There has been a noticeable decline in the percentage of U.S. adults who say they believe that biblical elements of the Christmas story — that Jesus was born to a virgin, for example — reflect historical events that actually occurred," Pew said of the results of the study, which was conducted in November and December.

"[A]lthough most Americans still say they mark the occasion as a religious holiday, there has been a slight drop in recent years in the share who say they do this," the study's



authors found.

Describing the decline as "small but significant," Pew said 76% of Christians believe all four "key elements" of the biblical account of the Messiah's birth, compared to 81% who believed the same in 2014.

The virgin birth, the visit of the Magi, the announcement of Jesus' birth by an angel, and the baby Jesus lying in the manger are elements of the biblical account Pew included in polling. Pew said when considering society as a whole, 57% of Americans embrace all four elements of the story — down from 65% in 2014.

Nine in 10 Americans celebrate Christmas, Pew said, but festivities are increasingly based on culture instead of Christianity. Fifty-five percent of those surveyed said they mark Christmas as a religious holiday, compared to 58% four years ago.

"To be sure, while the public's commemoration of Christmas may have less of a religious component now than in the past, the share of Americans who say they celebrate Christmas in some way has hardly budged at all."

Christmas Day or Christmas Eve church services were on

the schedules of 51% of those polled, down from 54% in 2013.

Regarding Christmas displays on government property, two-thirds approve of such displays today while 72% approved in 2014.

When it comes to greetings in stores and businesses at Christmastime, 52% of Americans express indifference to whether greeters proclaim "Merry Christmas" or some other expression. Nearly a third prefer to hear "Merry Christmas." Respondents were equally split in polling in 2012 and 2005, Pew said.

Politically, 54% of Republicans and Republican-leaning respondents expressed a preference for hearing "Merry Christmas," compared to 19% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning respondents. About 60% of Democrats said it doesn't matter, compared to 38% of Republicans.

Additionally, 68% of Republicans perceived that religious aspects of Christmas are emphasized less today than in the past, compared to half of Democrats. Just over half of Republicans said the trend bothers them to some degree, compared to 21% of Democrats.

Pew conducted the 2017 poll Nov. 29-Dec. 4 in telephone interviews with 1,503 adults in all 50 U.S. states and Washington D.C. Most of the interviews, 1,126, were conducted on cellphones; 377 were conducted on landline phones. A total of 728 adults polled did not have landlines, Pew said.

According to the organization's web site, Washington, D.C.-based Pew Research Center is "a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes, and trends shaping the world. It conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, media content analysis, and other empirical social science research. Pew Research Center does not take policy positions. It is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts."

The full results of the survey are online at PewForum.org, under the Religion tab.

California wildfires surrounding Southern Baptist churches

VENTURA, Calif. (BP) — Several California churches are at risk and unreachable as at least five wildfires being fed by the Santa Anna Winds phenomenon remain out of control — the latest approaching Los Angeles, ministry leaders reported to Baptist Press (BP).

The Thomas Fire in Ventura, the largest of the fires, is threatening churches in Gold Coast Association that are included in mandatory evacuation zones, said Director of Missions Vern Hancock.

Springs of Life Church in the Casitas Springs community of Ventura is in imminent danger, and Hancock said he has been unable to contact pastor Douglas Jones.

"All of Casitas Springs, the whole area, has been evacuated, and I've got a note in now to the pastor to find out what he knows," Hancock said. "The problem is the roads are all closed. You can't even get up

there, so we have no idea what's going on at this point."

A disaster relief volunteer visited two Ventura County evacuation shelters Dec. 5 and found "small populations" of evacuees and "very smoky conditions," said California Southern Baptist Convention (CSBC) disaster relief director Mike Bivins.

"We are still very much in the emergency stage of the disastrous fires in Southern California," Bivins said. "Our CSBC Disaster Relief volunteer teams are on standby to assist where needed. However, [volunteers] are not currently activated."

In addition to Springs of Life Church, pastors of at least five churches whose buildings are possibly endangered by the Ventura blaze, including facilities in Santa Paula and Ojai, were unreachable, Hancock said.

"That's why I have a call in to my pastors out there. I'm about

40 miles from there," Hancock said. "I've got to get those guys on the ground to let me know what's going on."

The latest wildfire, the Skirball Fire in Los Angeles, erupted Dec. 6 at 4 a.m. (PST) along the 405 Freeway in the Sepulveda Pass and had burned at least 150 acres by about six hours later, the Los Angeles Times reported.

The Los Angeles Fire Department said the fire was not at all contained and ordered about 150,000 people to evacuate, the Times reported.

The windswept fires are in addition to wildfires that scorched parts of northern California this fall, and account for what authorities have called the worst wildfire season in the state's history, according to CNN.

The fires have killed more than 40 people, according to news reports.

The Thomas Fire reached the



STILL GOING — The Skirball fire that erupted in Los Angeles proper at 4 a.m. (PST) on Dec. 6 has burned 150 acres, forced evacuation orders for some 150,000 residents, and was not at all contained more than six hours later. (BP screen capture courtesy of WeatherNetwork.com)

Pacific Coast on Dec. 6, destroying at least 150,000 buildings along the way, the Times reported. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection reported other strong wildfires in Southern California are the Creek Fire, which

has burned 11,377 acres in Los Angeles County; the Rye Fire, which has burned 7,000 acres in Los Angeles County; and the Little Mountain Fire, which has burned 100 acres in San Bernardino County.

If, by chance, you stayed up December 31 until midnight and crossed that magical line into January 1, 2018, and from that point you were to live until December 31 of this year, you will have used up 31,536,000 seconds. That's a huge mountain of seconds. I break the year down into seconds because that is basically the way it will come to you. We know in this day and time that a second can be broken down into smaller parts but generally speaking, it's about as small as we deal with.

It's just about the snap of your fingers — one second. If you put sixty of them together, you'll get a minute. If you want to just see them as they come in clusters, 86,400 of them make up one day. For 2018, if we live, we will have the mountain of 31,536,000 seconds. I think about Joshua as he was leading the people of God into a new land with new horizons and new mountains. The Lord spoke and said in Joshua 1:9, "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." What a great promise as we enter into this new landscape of 2018. What a wonderful truth to keep before us as we scale this mountain of over 31,000,000 seconds. As you launch into this adventure of a new year, let me just point out to you what the substance of the year is all about.

First: It is an evaluation. It is a great time to stop and think about where you've been and even more importantly, where you're going. I break a year down into seconds because it's almost a momentary snap of your fingers kind of thing that you make a decision. You may have thought about it a lot, but you make it in a moment and you begin a new thing in your life. As the year unfolds, no doubt many of us will make good decisions, right decisions, God-honoring decisions, and no doubt we may make some wrong decisions, bad decisions, harmful decisions.



With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

Mountain of Seconds

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). These things of the world that you may need to exist, that you worry about so much. You put God first and He will keep you first and will guide you into right decisions. At the end of the year and on the other side of the 31,000,000 seconds that you will be living out, you will look back and realize that for the most part your life has been shaped by an unending series of decisions you have made, and those decisions are open before God.

In a sense, that's what life is — the unending shaping of your life by the shaping of your life before God. I wouldn't encourage you just to make some New Year's resolutions because they come and go regardless of what it is. Stopping something or starting something, eating less or walking more, it all falls by the wayside, typically, in just a few days. When you look at each moment of life, each second of life, and tilt your heart toward God to ask Him to have His way, His plan and purpose in your life, you will find that as the seconds go by, the Lord comes and

wraps your life in His wonderful grace and strength and love and begins to make His difference in your life. Take a moment of evaluation as you use these seconds of 2018 and let God mold and make you one second at a time.

Secondly: It's not only a time of evaluation. It's a time of expectation. No doubt, 2018 will have trials and triumphs. Will every day be sunny? No. Will every day be rainy? No. Life is a great experience of the combination of challenges and celebrations. There will be throughout the year some new endings, and with each one of the new endings, you will find the possibilities of a new beginning. There are great expectations that you can have of the new year because the Lord has plans for you. When you walk with Him, you will discover that on the sunny days God is there doing wonderful things. On the rainy days, you will find that God is there doing amazing things. Don't miss out on the expectations. The Bible is filled with the word, faith. Trust God. Trust Him to lead you. Trust Him to work when the sun is shining and when you think it's never going to shine again. Trust Him because He will walk with you, and He will take the moun-

tain of seconds and begin to unfold and unveil the great expectations of what He wants to do in your life.

Third: The new year is also a time of exhilaration. We call it the new year, although if you didn't know and you weren't watching the television or listening to the countdown of the old year, it would just be the passing of time over a midnight hour of your existence. However, there is something new about it. There is something exhilarating about it. The ancient Hebrews called their new year Rosh Hashanah, which translated is "the head of the year." They celebrated it, but what they found out is what you and I find out pretty quickly is that the head of the new year, the new year celebration, turns into the sameness of life, the plainness of life, and it is possible to become cynical about the whole thing and think that that's all that life is.

Whoa, wait, no. Life, this mountain of 31,000,000+ seconds per year, is filled with moments of love and hope and strength and goodness and blessings and surprises and the presence of God over and over, refreshing you and lifting you and enabling you to face the next second. As the old Latin phrase says, "carpe diem," capture the day. Let the Lord help you to capture the moments of life. When you, day by day looking to Him, letting Him shape your life, letting Him guide your days and ways, you will come to the other side of the mountain looking back and saying, "Dear God, thank You for the mountain of seconds you gave me in 2018."

As Joshua tells us, God knows where we are. God knows where He is leading us. He will be there. If we're facing the armies and the difficulties and the obstacles, God will be there. Trust Him. Lean upon Him, and let Him bless every second of your life.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Staff Changes

Ricky Gray has announced his retirement from 30+ years as pastor of **Flowood Church, Flowood**. He is available for any ministry needs a church may have. He may be contacted at (601) 750-9596 or RabRic@bell-south.net.

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Smaller churches taking note of security needs

EASTPOINTE, Mich. (BP) — Shocked. That's how Michigan pastor Mathew Vroman said he felt after learning of the Nov. 5 massacre at a small Sutherland Springs, Texas, church that left 26 worship attendees dead at the hands of a gunman.

The pastor of Eastside Community Church in Eastpointe, Mi., joined the expanding cadre of small- and medium-sized-church leaders who are developing security plans in an effort to prevent armed attacks and other threats at their churches.

Secular media outlets are taking note of these security-minded leaders. USA Today reported on a Dec. 5 seminar titled, Church Security in the 21st Century, that drew 650 ministry leaders to Prestonwood Church in Plano, Texas, and was cosponsored by the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

Vroman told Baptist Press (BP) before the Sutherland Springs shooting that he knew he should develop a security plan but didn't look at it as a priority. The shooting "really kind of shocked me... I don't want to be a pastor that didn't do all I could to try to protect my folks with a plan."

As a first step toward a fully-orbed security plan, Eastside — which averages 60-100 in morning worship — identified a man in the congregation to lead a security team. The church has also begun to station a volunteer security watchman at the door during worship services and make sure the door to the children's area is secured.

In January, a team from Eastside will attend a church security training session sponsored by the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.

"We ultimately trust the Lord for everything," Vroman said, "but we are not determinists and we're not fatalists, so we have to be proactive in not just shepherding by preaching the Word, but we also have to protect our people physically, give them a safe place to come."

For John Mark Simmons, pastor of Highland Hills Church in Las Vegas, this fall brought two tragic reminders of the need for church security: Sutherland Springs and the shooting at a country music festival on the Las Vegas Strip that killed 58 people and injured more than 500 others.

"For the last several years, I've been concerned about security at the church," Simmons told BP, but recalled that "it wasn't a pressing issue."

Following the two shootings, however, a church member e-mailed Simmons expressing "a burden to move the church forward" regarding security, the pastor said. In response, Highland Hills Church — which averages 250 in worship — has enlisted a volunteer security team of about 15 church members and held two meetings in route to developing a security plan.

The security team has been aided by instructional videos from its insurance company, the pastor said, and may attend training sessions in the future.

Among measures Highland Hills Church has already put in place are locking doors that

don't need to be open during church events, stationing a watchman of the day at the main entrance on Sundays, and installing security film on some windows to prevent an intruder from smashing the glass and entering the building.

Additionally, the team is educating the entire congregation on what to do in the event of various types of security threats. No one on the team, Simmons noted, is required to carry a gun.

"I hope our attendees and worshippers will feel that we have been diligent and maybe have a bit more peace of mind that we are doing what we can to make the church a safe environment," Simmons said, adding a security team can be an opportunity for otherwise uninvolved members to serve the church body.

The Sutherland Springs shooting likewise impacted Tarpley Church in Tarpley, Texas, which like First Church in Sutherland Springs is small, rural, and in the San Antonio area. The day after the Sutherland Springs attack, Tarpley Church pastor Dick Sisk met with two law enforcement officers in the congregation to hammer out a security plan "that was adapted to our particular situation," Sisk said.

Tarpley's plan includes proactive measures to prevent crimes at the church, procedures to employ in the event of an active threat, and protocol to follow after a security threat has passed.

During worship services — which generally are attended by 80-95 people — the congrega-

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For more information, contact the Baptist State Convention of Michigan at 313-486-1234 or visit www.bsmi.org

The day-long seminars are scheduled from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. in the following locations:

Gulfport: January 8 at First Baptist Church
Hattiesburg: January 9 at Main Street Baptist Church
Gautier: January 22 at First Baptist Church
Tupelo: January 23 at Harrisburg Baptist Church
Bryant: January 24 at Country Woods Baptist Church
Visit www.bsmi.org to register!

tion always has a marked law enforcement vehicle parked near the parking lot entrance. Two law enforcement officers in the church are armed and seated

strategically in the auditorium.

Greeters, workers in the sound booth, and a team of security volunteers also have been assigned security duties.

Church security: Firearms in church bring comfort, alarm

SIXTH IN A SEVEN-PART SERIES

By Chester L. Quarles
(1944-2013)
Correspondent

You've just encountered an armed intruder in your church. What do you do? How do you respond to a nightmare?

You need a well thought-out plan, because most people lose their ability to think logically during an ongoing crisis. They lose their cognitive processing and make bad decisions. Being prepared can save your life and the lives of those in your congregation. Having a plan gives you an edge!

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all plan for an armed predator in any church. The mega-church has many more options than does a small congregation. A single shooter can't control a crowd of 3,000-

10,000 worshippers. Worshippers some distance from the spree shooter can evacuate through alternative exits. However, in a small church congregational setting the spree shooter can control all of the exits.

Most shooting trajectories (the path of the bullet) are higher than 18 inches. Positioning yourself lower than this significantly decreases your chances of being shot. If everyone hits the floor, it will also provide a clear shot for any gun-carrying guardian or police officer worshipping with you.

The officer or guardian can't fire if innocent people are in the way. He or she is totally helpless, even with a firearm, the skill to use it well, and the will to use it to save lives in a chaotic situation, where innocents impede a clear shot.

The time to stop the spree

shooter is before he enters the sanctuary. This is accomplished by a layered security program which should begin at your parking area. This is where your guardians can intervene. The best weapon available in a church shooting event is not a firearm — it's a cell phone and the requirement to dial it immediately upon perceiving a threat.

If a gun call is answered by law enforcement authorities, whether it be a robbery, shooting event, or a group hostage taking, you should be prepared to respond appropriately. Should the police enter your church during an on-going gun emergency, you should duck and take cover. If it is possible, get on the floor and avoid the bullets that may start flying.

For elderly people, the best idea is to lean forward in the pew and place your hands behind your head. This shows

your adversaries and the police as well that you are not a threat.

In a group hostage taking, all precipitous behavior should be avoided. If there is only one adversary, you may be able to stop him. If there are several, the situation is even more tenuous. Starting a firefight, even with a clear shot at one or more assailants, is fraught with danger for all in attendance.

Psychologists call active resistance in such a situation "counterphobic behavior," and it should be avoided at all costs.

Do what the hostage takers tell you to do. Never say "no" and never say "never" to armed men in a public setting. These words can get you killed. Robbers and hostage takers want control and they want it now! By acquiescing, you can become a "successful victim." Successful victims survive and usually don't require hospitalization.

If anyone loses control,

some of your people will likely be killed. With this in mind, church leaders should plan for the possibility of an active shooter or a group hostage taking event, and insure that all ushers, deacons, and members of your "Nehemiah's Team/Shepherd's Watch" are all operating from the same plan.

If shooting assaults are already taking place, men need to stop the shooter. Unfortunately, the best time to stop him is when he reloads.

Quarles, who died in October 2013, was professor emeritus of criminal justice and homeland security at the University of Mississippi, and co-author of the book, *Crime Prevention for Houses of Worship*. Copyright 2011. Used by permission. This series originally appeared aperiodically in *The Baptist Record* during 2011 and 2012.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

NOVEMBER 16-30

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DECEMBER 1-15

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The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

A Changed Family • Acts 16:22-34

If you have been following this series of teaching in Acts, you know we have highlighted each week a lesson in how today's church can be as missional as the early church. Let's review: 1. Everything we do must be Spirit led. 2. There will be hardships but persevere. 3. When there are disagreements, always consult the Word of God for truth. 4. Make sure to prepare the next generation to carry on the work. This week's lesson is powerful: 5. People will believe what they see you do more than what you say you do!

This story is so familiar. As a young child, I remember hearing and even singing a song about Paul and Silas being severely beaten, shackled to the walls of a deep, dank, prison, and then at midnight, worshiped in song. The lesson I remember being taught from this was that we should sing when things are going bad but these years later I see there is a deeper truth. Yes, we are to sing praises when things are bad but there is more to this story. After they sang, the scripture says, "Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open and everybody's chains came loose." Acts 16:26 (NIV, 1984) God had opened the

doors for Paul and Silas to get out but what did they do? They stayed. They stayed because this earthquake wasn't about them it was about what God can do if we allow Him. Paul and Silas' faith knew they would be released but the way of release was different than they imagined. They had heard of Peter's release and saw how God worked but they soon discovered God works differently for each circumstance.

Friend, earthquakes happen to all of us and many times they are sudden and violent. They often shake the very foundations of what we think life should be like. The earthquake might be an illness or death. It might be the loss of a job or a child taking a bad turn in life. Make no mistake, before the earthquake, most of us sang. Perhaps we proclaimed loudly, "Victory in Jesus," and we meant it. There were others who listened to our song and

wondered if we meant what we sang or were they just words? Suddenly, our own earthquake hits and that question will be answered in our lives and in the lives of those around us.

Being imprisoned is the world's idea but the earthquake was God's. We read, "The foundations were shaken." Perhaps what we need for our faith to be strengthened is for everything that makes sense to be turned upside down. Sometimes that takes an earthquake and when it upsets a Christian's life, the people who heard us sing will watch to see if we run or fall apart. They will look to see if we believed those songs or the scriptures we quoted. They will watch because often times they are caught up in their own earthquake and need to find hope for their lives. Paul and Silas stayed because of their faith and this particular earthquake was about to lead someone to Christ. The same is true in our lives

when life falls apart. If we stand and give God glory, the world will see that all we had been saying with our mouths was actually truth in our hearts.

This is not an easy thing to do and I am not declaring it is but it is a testimony of our heart. Many of us have sung at midnight and have even gotten used to singing. Our words clearly stated that Jesus is Lord, but often we fall apart when the foundation of what we thought life would be is challenged. Perhaps looking at this very familiar story from a different perspective can encourage us to stand in faith. When others see, they will be drawn, not to us but to the very one who set us free. God's earthquakes do not cause destruction but rather give freedom. Sometimes we receive physical freedom from life's chains but mostly freedom in knowing that He will take care of us no matter what the situation. When the world sees that we are free, yet care enough to stay until they know the source of freedom, they will desire to be saved. Today, allow your faith to prepare you for the earthquake!

Grace is a Bible teacher and conference speaker and is a member of First Church, Clinton.



Explore the Bible

with Cyndi Grace

Jesus Provides • Mark 6:34-44

Like many boys growing up, I was obsessed with baseball. Many of my childhood heroes wore the blue and white jerseys of the Atlanta Braves. If a kid can have an addiction, mine was watching the Braves on television each summer on what was then called "The Superstation." For kids of my generation, baseball also meant collecting baseball cards. I would save money given to me or my allowance and buy baseball cards. Some packs of cards contained players or teams I cared nothing about; some contained old, hard bubble gum. However, every now and then you would purchase a pack and a member of your favorite team would be included in the collection. That is when it was all worth it! You felt like you had been rewarded for your devotion.

Once, I was with my grandfather at Wal-Mart and I handed the cashier two packs of baseball cards. While reaching to get the required money from my pocket, my grandfather stated, "Put your money up." I was shocked. I replied, "You are going to buy them for me?" When he indicated he would get them for me, I ran and got two more packs! That day the provision I received was more than I could do for myself.

This week signals a new year with

an old reminder: God will always provide. Do you realize God is constantly desiring to teach and commune with His children? Recently, in my life it is the truth that God will provide. I could literally fill many pages of The Baptist Record with true stories and examples of how the Lord has provided for my family and me over the years. Tuition money for graduate school, a deep freezer filled with food, new suits, car repairs, health care and scores of other examples are among the countless number of blessings I have received.

Regarding the provisions I just mentioned, please note the following: they were the result of the graciousness of others. Secondly, I did nothing to deserve them. Next, it was God Himself who initiated someone else to show the love of Christ to me. Many of our greatest blessings come from the hands of others. Herein lies the challenge for us to consider. Are we in tune with God in such a way that we are quick to be a

blessing to others? There are two types of people in the world: givers and takers. Be a giver. In a world filled with takers, be like Jesus and give. Corrie ten Boom is quoted as saying, "Hold everything in your hands lightly, otherwise it hurts when God prides your fingers open."

Our lesson exemplifies what it means to be a giver and the lasting influence it can have. You may be tempted to look at this familiar story of loaves of bread and fish and dismiss its significance. Don't do it! Read Mark 6:34-44 with fresh eyes and an open heart. Did you know this is

the only miracle of Jesus recorded in each of the four gospels? I choose to believe its recurring appearance in the Scripture is neither coincidental nor without significance. Whether it be health-related, financial stress, relationship misunderstandings, or problems at church or work; what greater promise do we have from the Lord than the fact He knows our needs even

greater than we do and will provide in a way that is better than we could ever dream?

Another aspect of this miracle to consider is the reality of God taking what we have and using it on a larger stage. You may say to yourself, "I am just a Sunday School teacher, or I am just a preacher, or I am nothing special." Listen up! It is not about you or me to begin with. Some young lad brought a snack that day and Jesus used it to demonstrate His power and provision. Don't believe the lie that you will use your gift one day when the time is right. Share it now. Your "fish and loaves" were given to you by God to share with others and bring honor to Christ.

Finally, perhaps the greatest jewel found in this story is the to-go plates. Did you see it? Check out Mark 6:42-44 reveals to us the fact the crowd of thousands had their stomachs filled and there were baskets of leftovers. Actually, there were 12 baskets of leftovers. Just enough for each disciple to see with his eyes and touch with his hands the proofs of a Jesus that provides. What has God given you that needs to be shared? Pass it on!

McKay is pastor of Harperville Church, Harperville.

Bible Studies for Life

with Bobby McKay



TOP

cont. from p. 1

of Alabama head football coach Mike DuBose, released by the university in 1999 for alleged

"personal misconduct," went on to strengthen his commitment to Christ and use his talents to impact young athletes on and off the field.

9. Sutherland Springs. When a gunman opened fire on

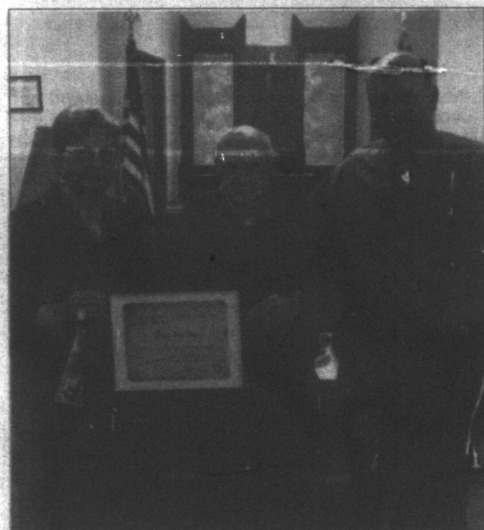
the rural congregation at First Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, Southern Baptists leaders ministered on the scene. The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board covered funeral expenses for

shooting victims in coordination with the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

10. IMB backtracks. International Mission Board (IMB) President David Platt withdrew from and apologized

for any division caused by an amicus brief the IMB joined last year in support of a New Jersey's Islamic society's U.S. Supreme Court case alleging a right to build a mosque in that state.

Just for the Record



Bennie Adams, deacon at **CENTER CHURCH, ATTALA COUNTY**, was recently recognized for his years of service as deacon. Shown are Tommie Jean Adams, Adams, and pastor Jeffery Hutchison.



SILAM CHURCH, MEADVILLE, recognized Leon Wallace and his wife Tammye on Pastor Appreciation Day Oct. 29, 2017. The couple celebrated with lunch and singing following the morning service. Cletus Moak, speaker; Marilyn Etheridge, music.



UNION HALL CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, participated in Brookhaven's annual Christmas parade. The theme was All-American Christmas and Union Hall won 3rd place for their float. Nick Hodges, pastor.



NEW PROSPECT CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, held a baby dedication Dec. 10. Shown are pastor Willie Welch with parents Callie and Garrett Smith and baby Josie Caroline.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically

via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

FSY EFMXSZ, KTO KXBO XE

WARWXRROY, FSY KTO CXSZGB GW

ZGY XE FX TFSY; LODOSK MO, FSY

VORXOIO KTO ZGEDOR.

BFLC GSO: WXWKOOS

Clue: W = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 21:25

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)
If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.